

Lone Wolf Club Newsletters

Newsletter – 1993 New Year’s Special

Joe Dever is the creator of the bestselling Lone Wolf adventure books and novels. He is the creator and editor of the original Lone Wolf Club Newsletters that were published between 1985–96.

Gary Chalk is the main illustrator of the early Lone Wolf Club Newsletters.

Brian Williams is the main illustrator of the later Lone Wolf Club Newsletters.

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David Davis – allowing scanned copies to be made of his near-complete collection of Lone Wolf Club Newsletters.

Paul Haskell – providing better quality scans of artwork taken from the books.

Fraser Hjorring – providing scans of the previously-missing pages 9 and 10.

Timothy Pederick – additional editing.

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1993 New Year's Special

OUT NOW!

The eighteenth gamebook in the Lone Wolf Grand Master series—

DAWN OF THE DRAGONS

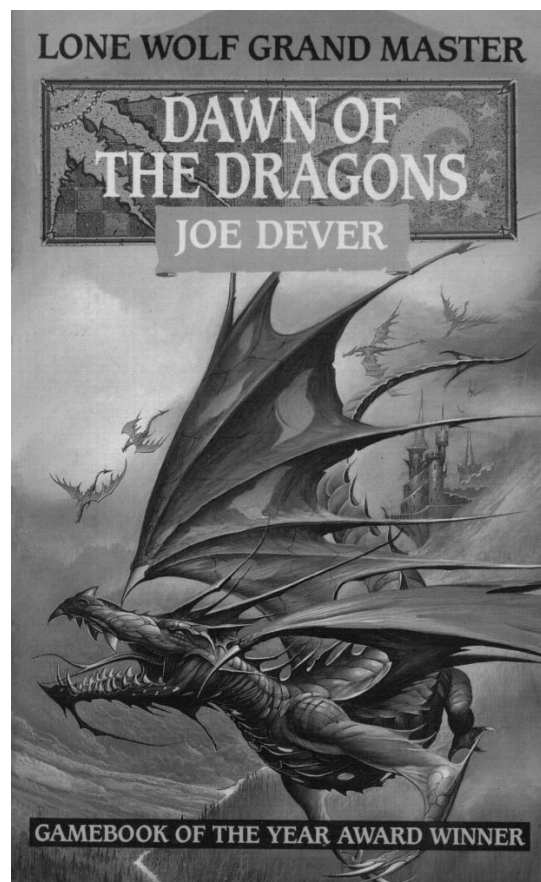
See page 10 for the special club order form which will enable you to get your copy, signed by author Joe Dever.

Also in this special edition of the Club Newsletter:

MASTER WOLF—Joe Dever gives a mega-interview with Role-Player Independent: Britain's newest magazine devoted to all aspects of the role-playing hobby, in which he outlines his plans for the future of the Lone Wolf series.

PLUS

SPECIAL COMPETITION—A special 1993 New Year's prize competition.



Master Wolf



Joe Dever reveals the history and future of Lone Wolf in this candid interview with Britain's newest role-playing magazine.

Interview with Joe Dever conducted by Chris Baylis

(A longer version of this interview appears in the January 1993 issue of Role-Player Independent magazine. The following abridgement appears here with the kind permission of RPI.)

Whatever your connection with role-playing, you will definitely have come across the name Joe Dever at same time or another. Joe was the first (only?) Brit' to win the prestigious AD&D (™) Championship in America, and has in recent years created one of the most intriguing and exciting literary heroes since Conan or Elric first fought their way into our souls. Lone Wolf, the Kai Grand Master of Sommerlund, has adventured and journeyed into international fame and popularity through Joe's unique imagination and penmanship, via full-length novels and fantasy gamebooks.

Vegetarian Joe, 36, married to Melanie and father of Ben (11) and Sophie (5), has overcome adversity to reach the dizzy heights of bestseller stardom, yet he has managed to retain his health, sense of humour, and most of all, his roots. Wealth and fame haven't altered his outlook on life or his approach to gaming, just his availability to it. He spends his free time shooting clay pigeons, painting, swimming, flying, parachuting, and fighting tabletop fantasy battles. Though, as he is constantly working on new Lone Wolf adventures, dutifully ensuring that each is sufficiently removed from the previous to be enjoyably different, he finds that nowadays he has precious little time for these hobbies. His family are all important to him and share his enjoyment of action movies, music, and foreign travel.

Catching Joe away from his word processor for a few moments, I was able to put these questions to him, and found him to be not only a most prolific author, but also a most pleasant, honest, and refreshingly forthright person to chat with.

RPI Did winning the ORIGINS AD&D (™) championship affect your decision to become a fantasy author?

JD Winning the AD&D (™) "open" in 1982 was a very satisfying experience as there were so many competitors and I was the only Brit' taking part. At the time I had no plans to become a professional author; that decision came about in the autumn of the following year. Although the win didn't set my career on a new course, on reflection it did help me later when I was seeking a publisher for Lone Wolf.



RPI Where did you find the inspiration to write fantasy novels and develop the World of Magnamund? For example, would you give any credit to Gary Gygax, AD&D (™) or role-playing in general for sending you along the road to fame and fortune as an author?

JD I suppose the earliest inspiration for the world of Lone Wolf came from playing wargames with toy soldiers when I was eight or nine years old. I had two fantasy armies which I'd built up from Airfix Roman and Medieval plastic soldiers, and I can remember running a campaign with four of my school friends. I created a fantasy world map and a set of campaign rules. These rules were a crude hybrid—a cross between Risk (the Waddington's game) and football league tables. Every Sunday afternoon we'd play out battles using a copy of the Donald Featherstone classic "Wargames", and I'd award the winners points that altered their position in the league. My main inspiration for the games was a comic strip called "The Trigan Empire" which appeared weekly in Look & Learn magazine. Until I was about sixteen, I used to run my school games club and organise regular historical-based wargames, mostly American Civil War and WWII battles. I was also an avid science-fiction reader, especially keen on the works of Moorcock, Peake, and Tolkien. When I left college and started work in the music industry my interest in sci-fi and games waned until, by chance, while I was working in Los Angeles in 1977, I discovered a 3-pamphlet set of rules called "Dungeons & Dragons" in a backstreet games shop. They were crudely produced, but I can still remember the eureka-like excitement when I realised the creative potential these rules offered. Without a doubt, discovering D&D (™) rekindled my interest in gaming and got me back into creating worlds and running campaigns. Lone Wolf and the world of Magnamund evolved from a series of role-playing campaigns that I ran between 1977–1981. During this period I kept careful record of all the games that I hosted for friends and associates. These were later to form the solid background and basis for the Lone Wolf books.

RPI Did you base the Lone Wolf character on anyone in particular? By this I mean were you influenced in his appearance, dress, code of behaviour, etc. by any past hero or heroes of book, game or screen, or did he, perhaps, evolve from your own favourite role-playing character?

JD Although the character of Lone Wolf was not based on any one individual, the character class of Kai Lord evolved during my early AD&D (™) campaigns. I suppose the Kai Lords are, in AD&D terms, psionic rangers with special powers bestowed on them by their gods. These powers (Kai Disciplines) are innate to them, but they are undeveloped at birth and can only emerge through training and / or campaign experience. Appearance-wise, the Kai are Nordic; their social setting, the land of Sommerlund, is neo-medieval European (a sort of cross between 13th century England and 11th century Denmark); alignment-wise they are Lawful-Good.

RPI Many of the Lone Wolf stories are based on your own role-playing experiences, is there one that springs most readily to mind which has possibly given you more satisfaction than any other?

JD The Battle of Cetza, which occurs in Lone Wolf 10—'The Dungeons of Torgar', was originally played out in its entirety on a wargames table about three years before I wrote the adventure. The book contains a detailed map showing the troop positions before the battle and, since publication, I must have received more than two dozen letters from readers who have recreated the battle on a tabletop and played it for themselves.



RPI Speaking of maps, each of your Lone Wolf books has a segment of the “world” map within its pages, but is there a complete map or map book available for readers who wish to play the games as a continuing campaign and see at a glance the position of each town, village or territory, to that of the current adventure? If not, would you consider producing one, possibly with a gazetteer, similar in manner to TSR’s first “World of Greyhawk” (™) folder pack?

JD The world maps of Magnamund were reproduced in colour in “The Magnamund Companion”, together with a gazetteer of all the nations and territories. It’s a very useful sourcebook if you’re thinking of setting a role-playing campaign in the world of Lone Wolf. Currently it’s out of print in the UK, but some copies of the US import edition are available from the Lone Wolf Club.

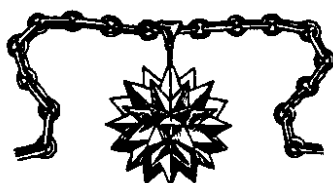
RPI Is Lone Wolf completely apart from you or is he in any way an extension of your dreams and fantasies, a sort of alter-ego?

JD There are certain aspects of Lone Wolf’s character that I admire, such as his moral strength and single-minded devotion to his worthy cause, and I suppose there are some parallels between the character and myself. But on the balance I would say they are few. I don’t consider the character to be my alter-ego.

RPI Yourself and Gary Chalk (your illustrator for the original books) became well known to fantasy games players in the UK as a gaming duo, and whenever one of your names was mentioned as attending a convention or function, it was naturally accepted that you would both be there together. What caused the parting of the ways between you?

JD I first met Gary in 1982 when I was working as a manager of a Games centre shop in London. He was working for Standard Games Ltd at the time and became a regular customer at the shop. In 1983, as fate would have it, we both ended up working for Games Workshop in London. He was illustrating game supplements and I was in charge of White Dwarf advertising. He knew I’d been working on Lone Wolf for years and when I asked him if he’d be the illustrator for the books he readily agreed. When we signed-up with Hutchinsons, the book publishers, they were keen to promote us as rivals to Livingstone & Jackson, which is why we often appeared together at publicity events, even though we always worked on the Lone Wolf books separately. I wrote the adventures and then Gary prepared his illustrations based on my manuscript and guidelines. At first everything went smoothly enough, but the huge success that Lone Wolf enjoyed during 1984–1985 brought with it pressures that I hadn’t anticipated. Gary, in my considered opinion, became very unreasonable. In the summer of 1985 I had had enough and I decided to sever our collaboration as I was finding it virtually impossible to communicate with him. I have since worked successfully with several other illustrators (notably Brian Williams, Peter Jones and Peter Parr) and writers (Ian Page and John Grant) who have made a great contribution to the evolution of the Lone Wolf saga.

RPI Games companies and fantasy publishers seem to have a habit of collapsing and British games oriented magazines are renown for not staying the course. Do you have any ideas on why these publications fail to reach their potential and grab the gamer’s attention in the way an American magazine like, say, the “Dragon (™)” has over the years ?



JD The reasons for the demise of recent British RPG independent magazines are wide and various. Some were brought down by the financial collapse of their parent companies, others failed to deliver what their readers really wanted, and some were simply not good enough. Today's RPG scene is in need of a good independent voice that only a non-house magazine can provide. For what it's worth, I think such a magazine must provide its readers with material relevant to their needs. Unbiased game reviews, clear photographs, high editorial standards and production values, idea-packed scenarios for the most popular systems, new miniatures from independent companies, competitions with decent prizes, etc. It must also take a bold stance with it's editorial comment and not be afraid to criticize the industry big-boys whose virtual monopoly seems geared to churning and burning youngsters who are new to the hobby. It's got to tell those kids that there is an independent alternative out there. But it cannot expect to be respected and supported by the UK gaming public just because it is independent; it's got to earn that support and respect. In these harsh economic times, it'll have to consistently give its readers a very good reason for buying each and every edition.

RPI Games Workshop have consistently sold thousands of copies of White Dwarf in the UK, Europe, and America. To what do you attribute this success and have they got a "magic" formula other magazines should be using?

JD White Dwarf has gone through a radical metamorphosis during the last 15 years or so. The only thing that has remained the same is the title. In its early days, when Workshop were primarily importing and distributing US role-playing games to the UK and Europe, it had a very benevolent attitude to all role-playing products that was beneficial to the growth of the hobby. But by the mid-1980s everything had changed. Those small RPG companies had become big corporations, Workshop included. Personally I would no longer classify White Dwarf as a magazine. It's nothing more than a monthly Games Workshop rules supplement welded to a glossy mail order catalogue. Most companies would describe such a publication as "sales literature".

RPI Fantasy game books were around for a few years before they became substantially accepted and the Livingstone-Jackson combination on Fighting Fantasy (™) introduced the majority of gamebook players to this style of solo role-playing. How much of an influence on you, and the creation of the Lone Wolf saga, were the Fighting Fantasy (™) books?

JD Fighting Fantasy (™) did not influence the creation of Lone Wolf per se, but it certainly influenced my decision to produce Lone Wolf in a solo role-playing format. Originally it had been my intention for Lone Wolf to be a role-playing campaign game, akin to RuneQuest (™). I was working at Games Workshop at the time that Fighting Fantasy (™) was taking off for Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, and the incredible success of their first few books was obvious to everyone there. Ian Livingstone knew that I had been working on Lone Wolf for a long time and he suggested that I let Games Workshop produce it. In return for handing over the copyright I would be paid the princely royalty of 1%! Frankly, I was so insulted by this offer that I decided that there was absolutely no way I was going to let Workshop have Lone Wolf. Instead, I decided to resign and develop Lone Wolf as a solo gamebook series in direct competition with Fighting Fantasy (™). It was the best business decision I've ever made. With hindsight, I suppose I owe Ian Livingstone a vote of thanks; had he offered me a half-decent



royalty I might well have been tempted to accept. I shudder to think how things would have worked out given that scenario!

RPI Not long after the game books became popular we saw a number of Graphic Adventure and Fantasy Quest books appear. These were A4 in size and highly colourful and of glossy high quality, yet they never were generally accepted by the UK gamers. Why do you think this was, and did you, or have you, contemplated producing a Lone Wolf equivalent?

JD There is a Lone Wolf graphic novel currently in production. It's entitled "The Skull of Agarash" and it is being illustrated by Cyril Julien, a young British artist. It's his first major project and we're both very excited by the way it is developing. He has a great eye for detail. The book will be 64 pages of A4, in colour and black & white, with Brian Williams' cover art. We're hoping to keep the price down below £5.00 which represents exceptional value for money. It's a straight graphic novel (not a solo gamebook or questbook) and the story is a wholly original Lone Wolf adventure that I've written specifically for this format. Publication in the UK is set for Christmas 1993. As for why the others failed; I think it was a deadly combination of hack text, average quality illustrations, and high cover prices, that put paid to the A4 Questbook format. Basically I don't think the standard was anywhere near good enough to warrant the price the public were being charged.

RPI You have written 18 Lone Wolf gamebooks and there have been 50 Fighting Fantasy (™) issues to date. Don't you think that between you all possible ground has been covered and that you are now both regurgitating old adventures under different banners, and, in a way, conning gamers into buying the same product in a variety of wrappers? And in the same line of reasoning, do you feel that AD&D (™) has reached its limitations and is now only dressing mutton as lamb by releasing umpteen different "new world" settings?

JD I think this may be a valid criticism of the Fighting Fantasy (™) series, but Lone Wolf is a completely different animal. For one thing, the Lone Wolf adventures are progressive: you can carry forward your character from one book to the next, just like a regular role-playing campaign. Each book can be played separately of course, yet when you play them in sequence you'll discover additional levels of subtlety and challenge. Many characters appear and reappear, just like old friends. Cryptic clues and special items found in earlier books become useful in later ones. Remember, the world of Lone Wolf was created long before I wrote the first adventure and consequently I have a wealth of detailed material to draw on. I have the luxury of being able to choose what to put in and what to leave out. I didn't have to suddenly create a world in response to the first book's success, or to satisfy a publisher hungry for more titles. The world was already there. Each of the Lone Wolf adventures has a different setting and I strive very hard not to duplicate any encounter or situation. Also I pay great attention to the quality of the prose and I always try to work in a few unexpected surprises that will keep my readers on their toes. Another important difference between Lone Wolf and Fighting Fantasy (™) is the fact that I am the sole author of the Lone Wolf series. Steve and Ian may have their names on the covers but they have not written all 50 books. By bringing in additional writers they have obviously been able to increase the number of books published, but I think the quality and



continuity of their series has suffered. However, I think the quality of the AD&D (™) new world settings is pretty good, though it's inevitable that a company the size of TSR will be product-driven, that is, having to constantly generate new material in order to stimulate interest and survive in a competitive market. There's a lot of new talent coming through, especially in the USA, and TSR, to their credit, appear to be nurturing this new wave of young writers and designers. Most are in their late teens and early twenties, and have been raised on 1980's role-playing material. Now they're starting to produce their own stuff. The signs are encouraging but only time will tell if they have anything stunningly radical to offer.

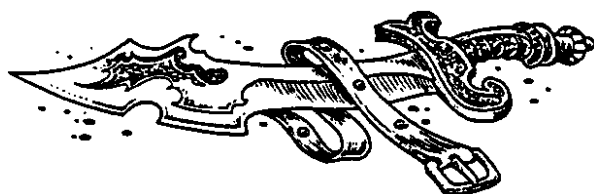
RPI How far do you intend to take the Lone Wolf series? Is there a defined ending that you have already written and "hidden" somewhere just waiting for the right moment to release it, rather similar in fashion to Agatha Christie and her famed detectives Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot, both of whom had their fates sealed a long time before their "final" adventures were printed?

JD I have indeed already outlined the progression of the Lone Wolf saga. I've designed in such a way that it will evolve over the course of four series, totalling 32 books:

- a) The Kai series (Books 1–5) is introductory and is aimed at beginners. The five adventures cover Lone Wolf's rise to the rank of Kai Master.
- b) The Magnakai Series (Books 6–12) is an intermediate set of adventures culminating with Lone Wolf's defeat of his arch-enemies—the Darklords of Helgedad. They span his rise to the rank of Kai Grand Master.
- c) The Grand Master Series (Books 13–20) is an advanced level of adventures culminating with Lone Wolf attaining the rank of Supreme Master.
- d) The New Order Series (books 21–32) Individual adventures by New Order Kai Lords. The readers will have the chance to create and play new Kai Lords, or they can take on the role of New Order Kai who first appear in the Grand Master Series. Lone Wolf selects quests for them in Southern Magnamund and beyond. Creation of new Kai Weapons and a modified rule system will enhance these role-playing challenges.

RPI What about after book 32?

JD My major commitment is to the role-playing system and I'm actually contracted to continue with Lone Wolf until at least 1995/96. I have also licensed Roger Andrews, one of Britain's best sculptors, to produce a series of fine art sculptures based on Lone Wolf and the main characters from the adventures. The first of these is a 9" statuette of Lone Wolf clad in Grand Master regalia. There is also a range of Lone Wolf 25mm miniatures that Alternative Armies have just released. These are also based on the Grand Master series. Finally, to take up what little remains of my spare time, I am contracted to produce more in the series of Lone Wolf audiobooks, the first of which "Eclipse of the Kai" is already in its third reprint. This is particularly satisfying as it has allowed me the chance to make use of my first career—music. It's given me the opportunity to compose and produce full musical and sound effects scores based on the Legends of Lone Wolf novels.



RPI At one time there were simply hundreds of amateur magazines, or fanzines as they are known, in the UK, and games stores would stock these on their shelves alongside the professional glossy mags. Now only a handful of these amateur publications have survived and games stores seem unwilling, almost frightened, to stock them. Do you think there is a place for the amateur press publication and do these often photocopied periodicals actually offer anything to the gamer?

JD Most amateur magazines, or fanzines, are labours of love on the part of their editors. They're born from a gnawing desire to spread the word about their excellent hobby, a pursuit which gives them great personal satisfaction and enjoyment. Why else would anyone subject themselves to the anguish, frustration, and expense of producing such publications. Nobody can seriously expect to make any money out of it, can they? And yet, despite the odds, they still appear. God bless 'em! The main reason the shops cut back or drop fanzines altogether is that: a) they have more profitable products to devote their shelf space to, or b) they simply can't be bothered to get involved with amateurs. Sad, but true.

RPI There is a distinct lack of "personalities" in gaming at present and so the re-emergence of Gary Gygax is quite a pleasant surprise, but do you see there being a market for his new product, even though it is in conjunction with the powerful GDW corporation?

JD Mr Gygax is still a major talent in the industry and we've all a lot to be thankful to him for. I've got great respect for his creative ability and I think his collaboration with GDW (who have been around as long as he has) will be a success, but perhaps more so with older gamers who recognise the name and respect his reputation. However, I don't think GDW can compete on equal terms with TSR, and for this reason alone I don't believe that "Dangerous Journeys" will oust AD&D (™) from the RPG top-slot.

RPI Do you still role-play, and if so which systems do you prefer? Also, do you consider yourself to be a better referee than player or vice-versa?

JD Yes I still role-play fairly regularly, at least once every two weeks, and most often I play large-scale fantasy battlegames (2000+ figures) using a personal set of rules that have evolved over many years. They were originally based on the 1st edition "Reaper" rules, the forerunner to Warhammer (™), but now bear little resemblance to that system. I also still enjoy AD&D (™) MERP (™) and Call of Cthulhu (™). I consider myself a better GM than player, after all, it's what I do for a living when you think about it. I'm sure my fellow players would agree.

RPI You have mentioned Lone Wolf as a role-playing system, can you expand a little on your ideas for this?

JD It is still my intention to turn Lone Wolf into a role-play system and I already have a few friends and colleagues involved in preparatory work. Hopefully this will evolve into a game worthy of succeeding the solo-gamebook system.

RPI Lone Wolf is a virtuous hero and is especially suitable for role-playing, but who were your own boyhood heroes and, if a film were to be made of Lone Wolf, who would you like to see in



the starring role? And, whilst talking of heroes, if you hadn't created Lone Wolf which hero would you like to have brought into existence?

JD I suppose, like most of my friends at the time, I most admired sportsmen and film stars when I was much younger. When I wasn't playing wargames, I was either on the football field or in the cinema. I was ten years old when England won the World Cup (1966) and so there's still a place in my heart for that England squad. Of all my boyhood heroes though, I think I most admired Steve McQueen, and the character he played in "The Great Escape" was probably in the back of my mind when I created Lone Wolf. Paramount Pictures did actually express an interest in the film rights last year and like any author, I would be flattered and delighted if a film was made based on my work. To play Lone Wolf? I think Michael Praed (he was Robin Hood on TV before Jason Connery took over the part) would be a good choice. At least he can fire a bow and handle a sword. If I hadn't created Lone Wolf I would have been proud to have been responsible for Elric of Melniboné, Michael Moorcock's moody albino anti-hero.

RPI We have Lone Wolf as a gamebook, Lone Wolf as a novel, Lone Wolf as audio-novels, there is a distant possibility of Lone Wolf—the movie, and a not-too-distant Lone Wolf, the role-playing game. Are there other Lone Wolf products available or in the pipeline?

JD There have been a few Lone Wolf computer games in the past, the most recent of which was "The Mirror of Death" from Audiogenic Software, in 1990. Currently I'm working closely with an American company who have bought the rights to Lone Wolf software. We're developing games for PCs, MACs, and for use with CD-I. My personal view is that computer role-playing is fun, but it's no match for the real thing. I feel that computers will have to progress substantially in the field of artificial intelligence before they can compete with the human experience of interactive role-playing.

RPI One of the industries growing from role-playing and gamebooks is weapon-making and costume designing for live role-playing groups. How do you feel about this area of gaming and have you ever tried live-action fantasy?

JD I was dubious about LRP when it first appeared because it all looked so naff! Then, slowly but surely, this weird role-playing aberration began to grow in popularity. Still the costumes and equipment looked naff; still I was dubious. Stalking wet and gloomy cellars clutching a rubber sword somehow just didn't appeal, but finally I was persuaded to don a fibreglass breastplate and exchange my trusty Levi 501s for a pair of furry swimming trunks during an IFGS convention in Denver. I have never been the same man since; it was brilliant! It was like discovering role-playing again for the first time, and if it wasn't for my work schedule and the changeable British weather, I'd be inclined to LRP more often.

RPI LRP and tabletop role-playing have been the subject of several attacks from religious groups, often accusing the gamers of being Satanists or Devil Worshipers, corrupting young, susceptible minds. Do you take these sects or suggestions seriously and do they affect you consciously when you are setting about writing a Lone Wolf book which you know will be read by impressionable youngsters?



JD I think the anti-RPG views expounded by the Evangelical Alliance, the Baptists, and other fundamentalist religious groups over the past couple of years have been thoroughly discredited. Many of the so-called facts and statistics which their arguments relied upon turned out to be either false, or wildly exaggerated, and consequently the whole contentious issue seems to have fizzled out. It's been a victory for common sense, albeit a temporary one. No doubt the next time some crazed loner shoots up a Mid-West town we'll see the tabloids painting a grubby finger of blame at role-playing, but until then I no longer think it's an issue we should be losing sleep over. When it comes to writing Lone Wolf, I find it very easy to maintain a sound moral basis for the stories. The character is unquestionably good; he fights evil wherever it raises its ugly head; he is committed to protecting the weak and the innocent; he rarely curses; he's kind to animals; he always looks both ways before crossing a road, and he doesn't smoke. I rest my case, m'lud.

RPI If I was to tell you that I was contemplating writing a fantasy book, is there anyone in the UK that I could turn to for assistance, and what advice would you give to other young gamers who are thinking of writing their first novel?

JD My advice would be to write to your favourite authors wherever practicable as most of us "pro's" are only too pleased to encourage our readers. If you are still at school then ask your English tutor for information about local writer's groups. The Society of Authors can help with leaflets and advice, and the Writer's Handbook (Editor: Barry Turner. Published by MacMillan) is a valuable source of names and addresses. If you are serious about writing a fantasy novel or gamebook, by which I mean you must be prepared to put in at least 200 hours of work (Hey, nobody said writing was easy!) then the best advice I can give is to write to me, via the Lone Wolf Fan Club, and I'll send you some practical guidelines which I hope will encourage you to develop your talent.

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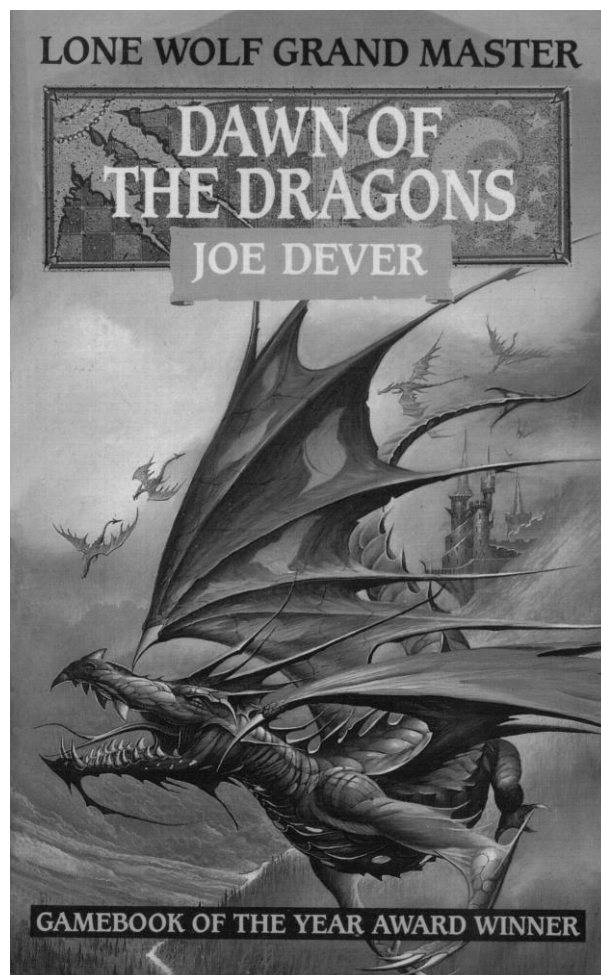
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All entries must be submitted no later than 1st April

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2. In which city was Joe working when he first discovered Dungeons & Dragons?
3. The land of Sommerlund is based on which two medieval countries?
4. Name the title of the Lone Wolf graphic novel which is currently in production?
5. What are the names of Joe's two children?
6. Name the sculptor of the new Lone Wolf fine art sculptures?
7. Name the company with whom Gary Gygax is now in Partnership?
8. Which film company expressed an interest in Lone Wolf last year?
9. What was the title of the Lone Wolf computer game produced by Audiogenic Software in 1990?
10. Who is the editor of the Writer's Handbook?



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21 August 2009

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